

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1100

WESTERN HEMISPHERE DRUG POLICY COMMISSION ACT OF 2009

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2134) to establish the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2134

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2008 in the United States, there were an estimated 25,768,000 users of marijuana, 5,255,000 users of cocaine, 850,000 users of methamphetamine, and 453,000 users of heroin.

(2) Nearly 100 percent of the United States cocaine supply originates in the Andean countries of Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru and over 90 percent of the United States heroin supply originates in Colombia and Mexico.

(3) In those countries, the cultivation, production and trafficking of cocaine and heroin generate violence, instability and corruption.

(4) In the transit countries of Central America, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, and other Caribbean countries, drug trafficking is central to the growing strength of organized criminals to threaten local and national law enforcement, political institutions, citizen security, rule of law, and United States security and interests.

(5) Drug-related violence is on the rise in Mexico and along the United States-Mexico border. 5,661 people died in Mexico in 2008 alone as a result of drug-related violence. This is more than double the 2007 total of 2,773.

(6) According to the Department of State's June 2009 Trafficking in Persons report, organized criminal networks in Mexico also "traffic Mexican women and girls into the United States for commercial sexual exploitation".

(7) Extremist groups and their supporters in the Western Hemisphere, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Hezbollah, often use drug trafficking to finance terrorist activities.

(8) From 1980-2008, United States counternarcotics assistance from the State and Defense Departments to Latin America and the Caribbean totaled about \$11,300,000,000.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE DRUG POLICY COMMISSION.

There is established an independent commission to be known as the "Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission" (in this Act referred to as the "Commission").

SEC. 4. PURPOSE.

The Commission shall review and evaluate United States policy regarding illicit drug

supply reduction and interdiction, with particular emphasis on international drug policies and programs directed toward the countries of the Western Hemisphere, along with foreign and domestic demand reduction policies and programs. The Commission shall identify policy and program options to improve existing international and domestic counternarcotics policy.

SEC. 5. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.

(a) REVIEW OF ILLICIT DRUG SUPPLY REDUCTION AND DEMAND REDUCTION POLICIES.—The Commission shall conduct a comprehensive review of United States policy regarding illicit drug supply reduction, interdiction, and demand reduction policies and shall, at a minimum, address the following topics:

(1) An assessment of United States international illicit drug control policies in the Western Hemisphere.

(2) An assessment of drug interdiction efforts, crop eradication programs, and the promotion of economic development alternatives to illicit drugs.

(3) The impact of the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), the Merida Initiative, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, and other programs in curbing drug production, drug trafficking, and drug-related violence in the Western Hemisphere.

(4) An assessment of how to better deploy and employ available technology to target major drug cartels.

(5) An assessment of efforts to curb the trafficking of chemical precursors for illicit drugs.

(6) An assessment of how the United States drug certification process serves United States interests with respect to United States international illicit drug control policies.

(7) An assessment of the nature and extent of the United States population's demand for illicit drugs.

(8) An assessment of United States drug prevention and treatment programs, including anti-drug coalitions, drug courts, and programs aimed at preventing recidivism.

(9) An assessment of the extent to which the consumption of illicit drugs in the United States is driven by individuals addicted to or abusive of illicit drugs, and the most effective experiences in the United States and throughout the world in treating those individuals and reducing the damage to themselves and to society.

(10) Recommendations on how best to improve United States policies aimed at reducing the supply of and demand for illicit drugs.

(11) Assessing the value of supporting relevant government entities and nongovernmental institutions in other countries of the Western Hemisphere in promoting the reduction of supply of and demand for illicit drugs.

(12) An assessment of whether the proper indicators of success are being used in United States illicit drug control policy.

(b) COORDINATION WITH GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs) IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.—In conducting the review required under subsection (a), the Commission shall consult with—

(1) government, academic, and nongovernmental leaders, as well as leaders from international organizations, from throughout the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean; and

(2) the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) to examine what changes would increase its effectiveness.

(c) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 12 months after the first meeting of the Commission, the Commission shall submit to the Com-

mittee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions of the Senate, the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Attorney General, and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) a report that contains a detailed statement of the recommendations, findings, and conclusions of the Commission, including summaries of the input and recommendations of the leaders and organizations with which is consulted under subsection (b).

(2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The report required under this subsection shall be made available to the public.

SEC. 6. MEMBERSHIP.

(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall be composed of ten members, to be appointed as follows:

(1) The majority leader and minority leader of the Senate shall each appoint two members.

(2) The Speaker and the minority leader of the House of Representatives shall each appoint two members.

(3) The President shall appoint two members.

(b) APPOINTMENTS.—The Commission may not include Members of Congress or other currently elected Federal, State, or local government officials.

(c) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT.—Each member shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. Any vacancies shall not affect the power and duties of the Commission, but shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(d) DATE.—Members of the Commission shall be appointed not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) INITIAL MEETING AND SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Commission shall hold an initial meeting to develop and implement a schedule for completion of the review and report required under section 5. At the initial meeting, the Commission shall select a Chairperson from among its members.

(f) QUORUM.—Six members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum.

(g) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Members shall receive travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in performance of services for the Commission.

SEC. 7. POWERS.

(a) MEETINGS.—The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chairperson or a majority of its members.

(b) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such hearings and undertake such other activities as the Commission determines necessary to carry out its duties.

(c) OTHER RESOURCES.—The Commission shall have reasonable access to documents, statistical data, and other such information the Commission determines necessary to carry out its duties from the Library of Congress, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Department of State, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Defense (including the United States Southern Command), and other agencies of the executive

and legislative branches of the Federal Government. The Chairperson of the Commission shall make requests for such access in writing when necessary. The General Services Administration (GSA) shall make office space available for day-to-day Commission activities and for scheduled Commission meetings. Upon request, the Administrator of General Services shall provide, on a reimbursable basis, such administrative support as the Commission requests to fulfill its duties.

(d) **AUTHORITY TO USE THE UNITED STATES MAILS.**—The Commission may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other departments and agencies of the United States.

(e) **AUTHORITY TO CONTRACT.**—Subject to the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, the Commission is authorized to enter into contracts with Federal and State agencies, private firms, institutions, and individuals for the conduct of activities necessary to the discharge of its duties and responsibilities. A contract, lease, or other legal agreement entered into by the Commission may not extend beyond the date of termination of the Commission.

SEC. 8. STAFF.

(a) **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.**—The Commission shall have a staff headed by an Executive Director. The Executive Director and such staff as is needed shall be paid at a rate not more than the rate of pay for level IV of the Executive Schedule.

(b) **STAFF APPOINTMENT.**—With the approval of the Commission, the Executive Director may appoint such personnel as the Executive Director determines to be appropriate. The Commission may appoint and fix the compensation of such other personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission to carry out its duties, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, except that no rate of pay fixed under this subsection may exceed the equivalent of that payable to a person occupying a position at level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(c) **EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.**—With the approval of the Commission, the Executive Director may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code.

(d) **DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.**—Upon the request of the Commission, the head of any Federal agency may detail, without reimbursement, any of the personnel of such agency to the Commission to assist in carrying out the duties of the Commission. Any such detail shall not interrupt or otherwise affect the civil service status or privileges of the personnel.

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There are authorized to be appropriated \$2,000,000 to carry out this Act.

(b) **AVAILABILITY.**—Amounts appropriated pursuant to subsection (a) shall remain available, without fiscal year limitation, until expended.

SEC. 10. SUNSET.

The Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission shall terminate 60 days after the submission to Congress of its report under section 5(c).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2134, a bill that I authored to establish a Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission.

I thank Foreign Affairs Chairman HOWARD BERMAN and Ranking Member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN for their support of this bill.

I am particularly grateful to CONNIE MACK, the ranking member of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, which I chair, for being my lead Republican cosponsor of this bill.

Madam Speaker, billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars have been spent over the years to fight the drug trade in Latin America and the Caribbean. In spite of our efforts, drug use in the United States has increased.

According to the Brookings Institution, since the peak of the heroin and cocaine epidemics of the mid-1980s, consumption rates for these narcotics have remained more or less stable. At the same time, amphetamine use has spread.

As Members of Congress, we owe it to our constituents to do a better job combating the drug trade and taking illegal drugs off of our cities' streets. I believe that we are long past due in re-examining our counternarcotics efforts here at home and throughout the Americas.

H.R. 2134 will create an independent commission to evaluate U.S. drug policies and programs aimed at reducing illicit drug supply in the Americas and the demand for these drugs here at home. This commission will assess all aspects of the illegal drug trade, including prevention and treatment programs in the United States.

The Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission will be required to submit recommendations on future U.S. drug policy to Congress and various Cabinet secretaries, including the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Attorney General.

To tackle our Nation's horrific drug problem once and for all, we must have a better sense of what works and what does not work. The citizens of our great country, who deal every day with illegal drugs on their streets, and our partners in the Americas, who have worked with us in fighting the drug trade for years, deserve no less.

Madam Speaker, I have long thought that, as we try to combat the growing of crops that produce drugs, we also need to combat the consumption side here at home, and this report will help

us to understand what we can do more effectively. I urge my colleagues to support this crucial legislation.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC, November 5, 2009.

Hon. HOWARD BERMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House
of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR HOWARD. This is to advise you that, as a result of your having consulted with us on provisions in H.R. 2134, the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009, that fall within the rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary, we are able to agree to discharging our committee from further consideration of the bill, in order that it may proceed without delay to the House floor for consideration.

The Judiciary Committee takes this action with the understanding that by forgoing further consideration of H.R. 2134 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and that our Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as the bill moves forward, so that we may address any remaining issues on matters in our jurisdiction. We also reserve the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this important legislation, and request your support if such a request is made.

I would appreciate your including this letter in your committee report, or in the Congressional Record during consideration of the bill on the House floor. Thank you for your attention to our requests, and for the cooperative relationship between our two committees.

Sincerely,

JOHN CONYERS, JR.,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, November 20, 2009.

Hon. JOHN CONYERS, JR.,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 2134, the "Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009."

I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation. I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary. I acknowledge that your Committee will not formally consider the bill and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill which fall within the Committee's Rule X jurisdiction.

Further, as to any House-Senate conference on the bill, I understand that your Committee reserves the right to seek the appointment of conferees for consideration of portions of the bill that are within the Committee's jurisdiction, and I agree to support a request by the Committee with respect to serving as conferees on the bill, consistent with the Speaker's practice in this regard.

I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record, and I look forward to working with you on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

HOWARD L. BERMAN,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
Washington, DC, October 28, 2009.
Hon. HOWARD BERMAN,
Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BERMAN: I am writing to confirm our understanding regarding H.R. 2134, the "Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009." As you know, this bill was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, which has jurisdictional interest in provisions of the bill.

In light of the interest in moving this bill forward promptly, I do not intend to exercise the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce by conducting further proceedings on H.R. 2134. I do this, however, only with the understanding that foregoing further consideration of H.R. 2134 at this time will not be construed as prejudicing this Committee's jurisdictional interests and prerogatives on the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. In addition, we reserve the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this legislation.

I would appreciate your including this letter in the Congressional Record during consideration of the bill on the House floor. Thank you for your cooperation on this matter.

Sincerely,

HENRY A. WAXMAN,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, November 2, 2009.
Hon. HENRY A. WAXMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Commerce,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 2134, the "Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009."

I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation. I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. I acknowledge that your Committee will not formally consider the bill and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill which fall within the Committee's Rule X jurisdiction.

Further, as to any House-Senate conference on the bill, I understand that your Committee reserves the right to seek the appointment of conferees for consideration of portions of the bill that are within the Committee's jurisdiction, and I agree to support a request by the Committee with respect to serving as conferees on the bill, consistent with the Speaker's practice in this regard.

I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record, and I look forward to working with you on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

HOWARD L. BERMAN,
Chairman.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the United States has been involved in multilateral international drug control efforts for nearly a century.

Over the years, our agencies have used a wide array of tools to counter the drug trade in our hemisphere, rang-

ing from multilateral cooperation and foreign assistance restrictions, to crop eradication, alternative development, interdiction, and institutional capacity building. Here within our own hemisphere the U.S. remains a major supporter and participant of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

Regionally and bilaterally the U.S. has also worked closely with responsible partners on counternarcotics efforts through important programs such as the Merida Initiative, the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, Plan Colombia, and the upcoming Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. Through these programs and others, at least eight U.S. agencies are involved in implementing U.S. international counternarcotics activities.

The Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission, created by this bill, H.R. 2134, will be responsible for assessing the promotion of economic development alternatives to illicit drugs, how to better employ technology to target major drug cartels, U.S. drug prevention and treatment programs, and the value of working with other governments and NGOs to promote the reduction of supply and demand for illicit drugs.

After this 1-year review, the commission will complete its mandate by providing a report to Congress that provides an assessment of overall U.S. international illicit drug control policies in our Western Hemisphere and recommendations on how to best improve these policies. It is critical that the appropriate measures be taken to ensure that U.S. drug policy, both here at home and abroad, is responsible and is effective.

Already we have seen tremendous results from some of our efforts. For example, in the last 2 years, the price of cocaine in the United States has increased nearly 80 percent while its purity has decreased nearly 30 percent. Drugs not only poison our children and our communities, but drugs fund and sustain many of the violent criminal groups and extremist organizations lurking in our hemisphere.

Within the last year or so, two major drug rings with ties to Hezbollah have been caught operating in our Western Hemisphere. The comfort with which these criminals traipse around the region is alarming.

However, with leaders like Hugo Chavez and Daniel Ortega bending over backwards to let rogue states like Iran expand its presence in the region, it really is no surprise that extremist groups like Hezbollah would also make their homes here.

We cannot allow the Western Hemisphere to become a staging ground for extremists. From money laundering to drug smuggling to arms trafficking, extremist groups like the FARC and Hezbollah, the regimes who support them, and their enablers are putting the people of the Americas in direct danger.

The United States must continue to work with our democratic allies to stamp out these threats. I am hopeful that this commission will help us to do just that.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, let me just say that I have listened to everything that my good friend and colleague from Florida, Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, said and I concur with every word that she said.

This is a very important bill. It's a very important subject, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mrs. BONO MACK. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2134, the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009.

Tackling substance abuse among all age groups will take a domestic and international effort that continually evolves to meet the challenge. The U.S. Government's approach to reducing the supply of and demand for drugs in the Western Hemisphere is a crucial place to start. This is the primary reason I strongly support this legislation. The challenge is one that not only affects so many families across our country, but also everything from our law enforcement efforts to scientific research, and diplomatic priorities.

The need to act on all fronts—prevention, treatment, research, and law enforcement—is crucial. There's no silver bullet.

In particular, I have serious concerns with the trends we are seeing among our youth toward prescription drug abuse. Drugs like OxyContin are being abused across our country, with 2,500 kids a day using a prescription drug to get high for the first time. Just because it's sitting in the medicine cabinet doesn't mean it is safe, and these drugs are often used as a gateway to street drugs.

The Commission created in the legislation is necessary, as it will allow us to better find the solutions to reducing the numbers of those using these dangerous substances, which are staggering within our own borders. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2008, over 20 million Americans aged 12 or older were current illicit drug users.

I hope to continue to work with the Foreign Affairs Committee as well as the Energy and Commerce Committee to create a foundation for a domestic and international drug policy that balances maintaining our vital law enforcement efforts with an augmented demand-side effort toward reducing substance abuse and addiction.

Finally, I appreciated the time I was able to take with the Chairman and Ranking Member along with other dignitaries to raise this issue at the Summit of the Americas. We'll only make progress if we are serious about an international coordinated effort.

Mr. ENGEL's legislation is a positive step toward addressing this issue, and I look forward to the bipartisan support of our colleagues today on H.R. 2134.

Mr. ENGEL, Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2134, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the

rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ENCOURAGING HUNGARY TO RESPECT THE RULE OF LAW

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 915) encouraging the Republic of Hungary to respect the rule of law, treat foreign investors fairly, and promote a free and independent press.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 915

Whereas, on October 23, 1956, some 100,000 Hungarian citizens began a nation-wide revolt against the Communist government of Hungary and its domination by the Soviet Union;

Whereas the Hungarian people fought bravely for freedom, democracy, and human rights;

Whereas, on March 12, 1999, the Government of Hungary, reflecting the will of the Hungarian people, formally became a member of NATO and on May 1, 2005, Hungary became a full member of the European Union;

Whereas the United States has invested over \$9,000,000,000 in Hungary since 1989 and the United States is the fourth-largest contributor and largest non-European contributor to foreign investment in Hungary according to the U.S. Department of Commerce;

Whereas the Hungarian Investment and Trade Development Agency reports that foreign direct investment has been crucial in boosting Hungary's economic performance and remains the driving force behind Hungary's economic success;

Whereas in 1997, the Hungarian National Radio and Television Board (ORTT) awarded licenses for two national radio stations, which are set to expire on November 19, 2009;

Whereas the two licenses are the only ones that allow for nationwide coverage by commercial, rather than state, radio-broadcast services in Hungary;

Whereas one of these licenses was awarded to a United States company and the other to a European company, each for a total of 12 years;

Whereas the Financial Times reported on November 6, 2009, that before the bids for renewal of their national licenses were due, these companies were approached by individuals claiming to represent the Socialist and Fidesz Parties in Hungary offering to extend their licenses if the parties received 50 percent of the companies' equity;

Whereas the Financial Times also reported on November 6, 2009, that both stations refused this alleged extortion attempt and the ORTT delegates from Fidesz and the ruling Socialist party voted to award the licenses to two politically-connected local bidders instead;

Whereas the Wall Street Journal reported on November 10, 2009, that Hungary's Prime Minister and the Chair of the ORTT have publicly decried the process by which these licenses were awarded;

Whereas the Economist reported on November 7, 2009, that the Chair of the ORTT resigned in protest and refused to sign the politically-motivated contracts;

Whereas United States investors are an important part of the Hungarian economy and deserve equitable treatment in accordance with United States and Hungarian laws;

Whereas unfair treatment of foreign companies will deter investment and hinder economic growth in Hungary; and

Whereas respect for the rule of law and a free and independent press will spur investor confidence in Hungary: Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the recent action by the Hungarian National Radio and Television Board that awarded the national community radio licenses;

(2) encourages the Republic of Hungary to respect the rule of law and treat foreign investors fairly; and

(3) encourages the Republic of Hungary to maintain its commitment to a free and independent press.

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I seek to claim time in opposition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman from Florida opposed to the resolution?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I do not oppose this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) for introducing this important resolution.

Let me just say in 1989 Hungary joined its Central and Eastern European neighbors in throwing off the mantle of communist rule. By taking the brave and unprecedented decision in that year to open its borders to Austria and to allow East Germans to travel freely to the West, Hungary played a decisive role in bringing about the end of the Cold War. In the 20 years since, Hungary has become a member of NATO, the European Union and a strong partner of the United States.

Hungary is working side-by-side with the U.S. in Afghanistan, where it leads the provincial reconstruction team in Baghlan Province, and it has been a partner in conflicts in Iraq and in the Balkans. We greatly appreciate Hungary's staunch support in these and many areas.

However, we have become concerned about recent reports of possible unfair treatment of foreign investors in Hungary and possible efforts to inject politically motivated demands into the commercial process. In particular, we are concerned by the actions of the Hungarian National Radio and Television Board, ORTT, in deciding not to

renew the national radio licenses for two foreign companies, one of which is American-owned, and to award them instead to two local bidders.

In 1997, the ORTT awarded to the foreign companies the only two licenses to provide commercial, rather than state-owned, nationwide broadcast services. Those licenses expired on November 19 of this year.

According to widespread media reporting, the two foreign companies have alleged that before their renewal bids were due, they were approached by representatives of Hungary's two leading political parties, offering to ensure their licenses would be extended if they agreed to the representatives' demands for a percentage of the company's equity and a say in editorial content.

The two foreign companies refused, and the ORTT awarded the licenses to the two local bidders instead, who had submitted tenders that many outside experts have said are not commercially viable.

The day following the award, the chairman of the ORTT resigned in protest, claiming that the two local bidders' contracts were flawed and economically unsound. Numerous commentators have indicated that on the face of it, the ORTT's decision clearly appears to have been politically motivated and have ignored the economic feasibility of the two local bidders' tenders.

Madam Speaker, American companies have invested over \$9 billion in Hungary since 1989. Hungary's economy, as with every other country, has been severely affected by the global economic downturn. We support U.S. companies' investment in Hungary, but we note that events such as this case give rise to questions about the fairness and transparency of doing business in Hungary.

We welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to investigate any complaint relating to foreign investments, and the decision by the Hungarian Parliament's Constitutional and Justice Committee to set up a body to examine the radio license transaction.

Hungary is a close friend and ally of the United States, and we urge the government to take all necessary steps to ensure that foreign investors are treated fairly. I urge all of my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to split the time evenly in favor of the resolution with my colleague, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his inquiry.

Mr. KUCINICH. The gentleman asks for unanimous consent to split the time between himself and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I have already claimed time in opposition. What does the Chair rule on that?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio will control 20 minutes in opposition.